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World

IRAN

The Shah's Fight for Survival

He names a military government and promises reform—but is it all too late?

The tone was contrite. The words were conciliatory. The old imperial arrogance was gone. "Your revolutionary message has been heard," said Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi. "I am aware of everything you have given your lives for. I commit myself to make up for past mistakes, to fight corruption and injustice, and to form a national government to carry out free elections."

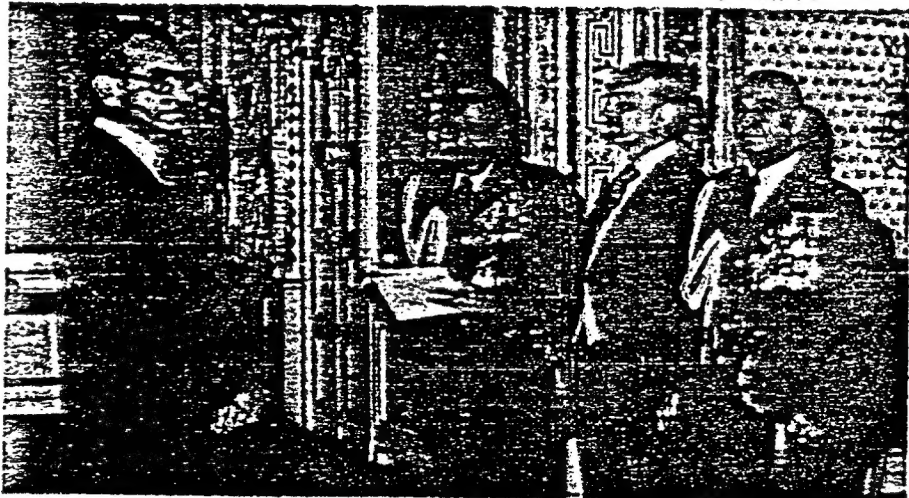
The speech was unprecedented for Iran's proud autocrat. It reminded some history-conscious observers of the last days of Imperial Russia's Czar Nicholas II in 1917, or France's King Louis XVI

Saturday night, students at the University of Tehran tore down a statue of the Shah that stood at the entrance to their campus. Iranian soldiers, who had been under orders to use restraint since the "Black Friday" demonstrations on Sept. 8 that left hundreds dead, suddenly turned tough and fired into the crowd, killing eight and wounding 82.

Next day thousands of students who had gathered at the university to mourn the dead surged through its gates into downtown Tehran. They burned buildings, sacked hotels, trashed cinemas, bars, liquor stores and airline offices, which

prominent Iranian officials, including Amir Abbas Hoveida, 59, the Shah's Premier from 1965 to 1977, and General Nematullah Nasiri, 71, former head of SAVAK, Iran's dreaded secret police, were arrested and held for trial on charges of corruption and abuse of power. At week's end the government also arrested Karim Sanjabi, leader of the opposition's National Front, and ordered troops to help man the strikebound oilfields.

The Shah announced that a special commission would investigate charges of financial manipulations that have enriched the royal family. Earlier this fall, he ordered his relatives to divest themselves of any financial interest in government enterprises. Since then, 64 members of the royal family—all except the Shah, Empress Farah and their three youngest children—have left the country, presumably taking their riches with them. The Shah said that a second commission would look into the Pahlavi Foundation, a tax-free charitable organization with annual revenues estimated at \$500 million, which controls vast industrial and business holdings in the country.



The Shah (left) with General Gholam Reza Azhari (center) and other members of new Cabinet
In one hand a letter of repentance, in the other a machine gun and a bayonet.

trying to stem the revolutionary fervor that was eventually to sweep him from his throne in 1792. In a televised address to his rebellious country, the Shah announced that he was placing strife-and-strike-torn Iran under temporary military rule. Simultaneously, however, he pledged to meet virtually all the demands of his regime's opposition—all, that is, except for his own abdication from the Peacock Throne.

The Shah's decision to call in the military came after a weekend of savage rioting in the capital, Tehran. The violence followed a period of frantic but unsuccessful efforts by the Shah to put together a coalition government that would include members of the opposition National Front, an alignment of moderate political groups as well as the two leading Muslim religious leaders, the Ayatollahs Khomeini and Shariyat.

have come to be reviled by both leftists and religious rightists as detested symbols of Western economic domination. This time the troops did nothing. The Shah decided it was time to act. He asked for the resignation of Premier Jaafar Sharif-Emami and his ten-week-old government. On Sunday evening, the Shah named General Gholam Reza Azhari, 61, a career officer who has been Chief of Staff of the armed forces since 1971, as Premier and head of a new Cabinet composed of nine military leaders and twelve civilians.

The new Premier declared that "the main program of my government is to re-establish an all-embracing peace and security through a campaign against financial and social corruption to an extent that will convince all honest Iranians." Corruption has emerged as one of the most in-

For opponents of the Shah, the political moves were a case of too little and too late—and may well have reinforced their feeling that the monarch was on the ropes. As a high-ranking Iranian officer said, "The more you feed an alligator, the bigger and hungrier it becomes." From his home in exile outside Paris, Ayatollah Khomeini castigated the imposition of military rule as a "plot that will not work." Said Khomeini: "In one hand, the Shah held a letter of repentance for his crimes, but in the other hand he held a bayonet and a machine gun." National Front Leader Sanjabi had returned from Paris adamantly opposed to any compromise with the Shah. Before his arrest, Sanjabi reiterated the National Front's call for a referendum on the monarchy.

After the military government was installed, the number of violent incidents dropped notably. Army reinforcements moved into Tehran. There are now 100,000 soldiers in the capital alone, supported by more than 200 tanks. Many youthful agitators went underground. With all schools and universities closed and the country's 400,000 teachers still on strike, there was no place for student protesters remained ada-